



H.R. 3079 - To amend the Joint Resolution Approving the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and for other purposes

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 3079 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Delegate Donna M. Christensen (D-VI) on July 18, 2007. The bill was ordered to be reported from the Committee Natural Resources, by voice vote, on November 7, 2007.

H.R. 3079 is expected to be considered on the floor on December 11, 2007.

SUMMARY

H.R. 3079 establishes the Northern Mariana Islands as a Commonwealth. The legislation allows the Northern Mariana Islands a delegate in the House of Representatives, that will be allowed to vote in committees and the full House.

*Note – In accordance with H.Res. 78, which was passed in the 110th Congress on January 24 by a vote of 226 – 191 ([RC 57](#)), “If a margin within which the votes cast by the Delegates and the Resident Commissioner is decisive in the outcome of the vote, the vote will be taken again without the Delegates or Resident Commissioner voting.” This rule does not apply to delegates during committee proceedings.

H.R. 3079 states that a delegate must:

- Be at least 25 years of age;
- Be a citizen of the United States for 7 years;
- Be a resident of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands for at least 7 years prior to the date of the election;
- Be qualified to vote in the Northern Mariana Islands; and
- At the date of the election, cannot be a candidate for any other office.

Additionally, this legislation will apply most U.S. immigration laws to the Islands after a transition period, including those laws pertaining to temporary workers. During the

transition period, the Department of Homeland Security may establish an Islands-only temporary worker program so as to minimize the shocks to the Islands' economy.

BACKGROUND

After Japan was defeated in World War II, the United Nations signed the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. This allowed the U.S. to administer the Islands with the Islands being able to elect their own leadership. In the 1970's the territory chose to forgo independence and instead forged closer ties with the United States. In 1972, negotiations began for the territory to become a commonwealth and in 1976 the commonwealth was formed.

**Note – A commonwealth is a self-governing territory voluntarily associated with the United States, such as Puerto Rico.*

The Northern Mariana Islands are important for the United States due to their strategic position and military importance in the Far East. The North Mariana Islands consist of 15 islands located about three-quarters of the way from Hawaii to the Philippines.

CBO ESTIMATE

“CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 3079 would result in additional discretionary outlays of \$10 million over the 2008-2012 period, assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts.”

STAFF CONTACT

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